

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 20, 2025

Mark Zuckerberg  
Chairman and CEO  
Meta  
1 Hacker Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg,

We write to inquire about Meta’s current firearms and related accessories advertising policy. Specifically, we would like to understand the company’s content policy for devices that can be modified or repurposed into firearm accessories, including silencers, or sound suppressors.

On January 3, 2025, *Wired*<sup>1</sup> published an article about advertisements appearing on Meta’s platforms—Facebook and Instagram—for devices known as “fuel filters” and “solvent traps” that are easily turned into firearm silencers. These ads include demonstrations on how to convert the devices into silencers, which help dampen a firearm’s sound signature and eliminate its muzzle flash, making it more difficult to determine where a gunshot originated for bystanders and law enforcement to run, hide, or protect others.

For nearly a century, suppressors have been heavily regulated under the National Firearms Act of 1934 (NFA). The NFA requires anyone who seeks to make or purchase a silencer to submit an application to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) with their fingerprints, a passport-style photograph, and a \$200 tax stamp, and undergo an enhanced background check.<sup>2</sup> Along with approval to build or receive a silencer, the NFA also requires all silencers be registered with ATF.<sup>3</sup> When Congress enacted the NFA, it intended “to curtail, if not prohibit, transactions in NFA firearms,” including silencers, because these weapons “pose[d] a significant crime problem” due to their “frequent use.”<sup>4</sup>

Silencers have been used in high-profile mass shootings, including in Monterey Park, California, in January 2023, and Virginia Beach, Virginia, in May 2019. In Monterey Park, the shooter used an assault weapon equipped with a silencer to kill 11 and wound nine others at a Lunar New Year celebration. In Virginia Beach, the shooter used two pistols, including one equipped with a silencer, to kill 12 and wound four others at a government office building. One Virginia Beach survivor said that the shooter’s firearm sounded like a nail gun and explained that had “it [been] a regular gunshot, we would’ve definitely known a lot sooner...[and] could’ve all secured

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wired.com/story/fuel-filter-gun-silencer-ads-facebook-instagram/>

<sup>2</sup> 26 U.S.C. § 5812, 26 U.S.C. § 5822

<sup>3</sup> 26 U.S.C. 5841

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.atf.gov/rules-and-regulations/national-firearms-act>

ourselves.”<sup>5</sup> More recently, in December 2024, UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson was shot and killed with a 9mm ghost gun equipped with a silencer in New York City. The silencer appears to have been made using a 3D printer.<sup>6</sup>

The ATF has stated that the test for whether an item is a silencer—and therefore regulated by the NFA—is not the label a manufacturer or retailer applies, but if the item fits under the statutory definition of “any combination of parts, designed or redesigned, and intended for use in assembling or fabricating a firearm silencer or firearm muffler.” This means it is a violation of the NFA to convert the advertised “fuel filters,” sold with the same objective design features as silencers, into silencers without NFA approval or registration.<sup>7</sup>

Meta’s policy is to prohibit advertisements and posts that encourage committing felonies and ban ads that promote weapons sales, including firearm accessories such as silencers.<sup>8</sup> Despite this, according to *Wired*, only 74 of the 2,800 ads for these devices that it identified have been removed by Meta’s moderation process. Even when the ads in question had been removed, nearly identical ads surfaced from different accounts.

In light of ongoing discussions surrounding the critical need to reduce gun violence, we would appreciate clarification on the following:

1. Is Meta aware that ads demonstrating how to convert everyday items into firearm silencers and accessories are being shown on its platforms? If so, what is Meta doing to ensure these ads are removed?
2. We understand that Meta uses a combination of automated systems and human moderators to review ads. Is this automated system specifically trained to identify firearms and firearms accessories?
3. Is the automated system trained to identify common modifications for creating firearms and related accessories?
4. How frequently do human moderators check the work of the automated systems?
5. Do they have specialized training for identifying common modifications?
6. Does Meta report the businesses responsible for the ads to the ATF?

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/virginia-beach-shooter-killed-12-using-silencer-high-capacity-magazine -n1012771>

<sup>6</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/US/unitedhealthcare-ceo-killing-luigi-mangiones-fights-extradition/story?id=116670461>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/open-letter/all-ffls-open-letter-nov-2023-solvent-trap-devices/download>

<sup>8</sup> <https://transparency.meta.com/policies/ad-standards/>

Despite the strict regulation of silencers, their use in crime has increased since 2017.<sup>9</sup> This increase can be explained by the rise in homemade “fuel filter” and “solvent trap” silencers. According to ATF, between 2017 and 2021, law enforcement personnel recovered an estimated 9,130 privately made silencers and silencer parts, a 176.8-percent increase from the 3,298 recovered between 2012 and 2016.<sup>10</sup>

It is imperative that Meta works to ensure that ads for items easily converted into silencers are removed from its platforms. Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response by March 14, 2025, and any additional insights you can provide about your policies and procedures.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

  
Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress

  
Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress

  
Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress

  
Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

  
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

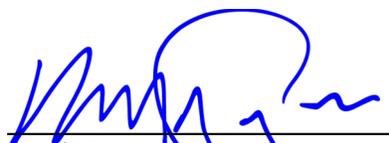
  
Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress

  
Seth Magaziner  
Member of Congress

  
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

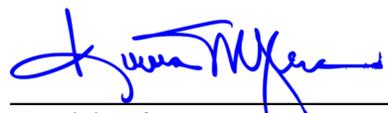
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.wired.com/story/fuel-filter-gun-silencer-ads-facebook-instagram/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-ii-part-vii-recommendations/download>



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Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



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Kweisi Mfume  
Member of Congress



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Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress



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Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress



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Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress



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Maxwell Alejandro Frost  
Member of Congress



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JM Tokuda  
Member of Congress



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Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress



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Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



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Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress



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Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

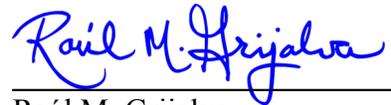


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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



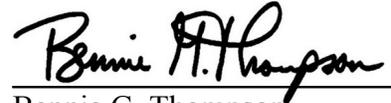
Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



Dan Goldman  
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress



Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee  
Member of Congress



LaMonica McIver  
Member of Congress



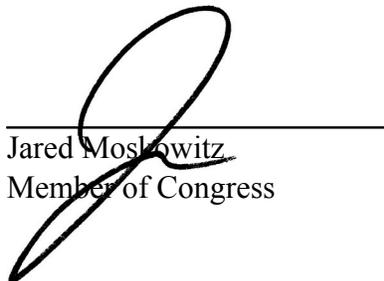
Timothy M. Kennedy  
Member of Congress



Sean Casten  
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Valerie P. Foushee  
Member of Congress



Jared Moskowitz  
Member of Congress



Jason Crow  
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress